

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

**Use of Video News Releases by  
Broadcast Licensees and  
Cable Operators**

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**MB Docket No. 05-171**

**COMMENTS OF  
THE RADIO-TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION**

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The Radio-Television News Directors Association (“RTNDA”), by its attorneys, hereby submits its comments in response to the Public Notice issued by the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) in the above-captioned proceeding.<sup>1</sup> RTNDA is the world’s largest professional organization devoted exclusively to electronic journalism. RTNDA’s membership includes news executives in broadcasting, cable and other electronic media in more than thirty countries.

The FCC has instituted this proceeding to consider whether the use of Video News Releases (“VNRs”) by broadcast licenses, cable operators, and others complies with the Commission’s sponsorship identification rules. The *Notice* seeks comment on the overall use of VNRs and requests information in the following five general areas: (i) how VNRs are used in programming; (ii) whether broadcasters receive compensation for VNRs or are provided them

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<sup>1</sup> *Commission Reminds Broadcast Licenses, Cable Operators and Others of Requirements Applicable to Video News Releases and Seeks Comment on the Use of Video News Releases by Broadcast Licenses and Cable Operators*, Public Notice, MB Docket No. 05-171, FCC 05-84 (rel. Apr. 13, 2005) (the “*Notice*”).

free of charge; (iii) whether there are mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with the Commission's mandatory disclosure rules; (iv) whether VNRs are received as part of an overall news service; and (v) whether there are alternative or better means of ensuring proper disclosure.

RTNDA's members are on the front lines in managing the news operations of radio, television, cable and other news distribution organizations. In response to the Commission's *Notice*, RTNDA conducted an informal survey of its members to obtain answers to the questions posed therein. In addition, RTNDA's President, Legal Counsel, and Board Members engaged in numerous conversations with local and network news executives in companies both large and small. The information provided in these comments is based on approximately 100 responses and the bottom line is this: electronic journalists are committed to providing accurate and credible news stories. That commitment includes appropriate identification of materials used in news stories. Credibility is the stock in trade of RTNDA's members. If viewers and listeners cannot trust the stories presented on radio and television, they will tune out—literally.

The appropriate use of third party audio and video news releases is not a new subject for RTNDA's members. RTNDA has sought to address questions of when and how to use these materials for more than 15 years. RTNDA's consistent policy has been that clear and complete disclosure of outside materials must occur, and this policy is incorporated in RTNDA's Code of Ethics. With the recent and public reports concerning governmentally produced and funded videos, RTNDA revisited and expanded upon the policy guidelines governing VNR use. News directors have reviewed the guidelines with their staffs, and they have fine-tuned their procedures to ensure material is properly identified.

Recent reports have left many with the mistaken impression that unidentified VNRs are widely used. As will be discussed fully below, based on the information RTNDA has received

from news directors, the truth is that little outside material is used in the dozens of stories and hours of news programming that stations produce each and every day. When third party material is used, it is most often excerpted or used as background footage. And it is attributed. Rarely are entire releases used, and even more rarely is the source not identified.

Even so, some mistakes were made. In part, these miscues can be traced to technological changes that have made the distribution of audio and video materials more complicated, and led to difficulties in ascertaining points of origin. The reported cases of unlabelled material have resulted in steps being taken to reemphasize, endorse and facilitate full disclosure. News organizations and producers have changed and are changing their distribution procedures to make sure material is clearly labeled. In the newsroom, news directors and journalists also have taken steps to ensure adherence to the RTNDA guidelines.

RTNDA's members are committed to the appropriate identification of third party materials, and respectfully submit that existing FCC regulations, journalism ethics and the reinvigorated newsroom practices will adequately and properly ensure that the public is fully informed. Accordingly, RTNDA does not believe that the Commission need take any further action to regulate the use of VNRs by broadcast licensees and cable operators.

Determining the content of a newscast, including when and how to identify sources, is at the very heart of the responsibilities of electronic journalists, and these decisions must remain far removed from government involvement or supervision. The government must be cautious in considering any action that could interfere with journalistic judgments or otherwise influence or prescribe news decisions or content. Any such action must be a last resort, not an initial reaction. The government would not dream of inserting itself into a print newsroom to dictate how newspaper editors utilize press releases. RTNDA urges the Commission, therefore, not to

respond to the mistakes of a few by imposing rules that could affect the selection and presentation of newsworthy material.

**I. RTNDA’S CODE OF ETHICS AND GUIDELINES PROVIDE THAT ELECTRONIC JOURNALISTS SHOULD CLEARLY DISCLOSE THE ORIGIN OF INFORMATION AND LABEL ALL MATERIALS PROVIDED BY OUTSIDERS**

The issue of how to use material from video and audio news releases is one RTNDA has grappled with for more than 15 years. As electronic journalists, RTNDA members are committed to providing the public with accurate and credible news stories. In 1989, RTNDA’s Board of Directors, whose members are news executives from across the country, adopted a policy that calls for clear and complete disclosure of the origin of any outside material that is used in a news story or news program. This policy was incorporated into the RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct when it was revised in 2000. The statement is unambiguous. The Code says that professional electronic journalists should “clearly disclose the origin of information and label all materials provided by outsiders.” A copy of RTNDA’s Code of Ethics is provided as Attachment A.

Last year, when it was first disclosed that a few stations had used a video news release produced by a federal agency without disclosing the origin, possibly because the origin was not clear, the RTNDA Ethics Committee decided to expand its guidance on the use of outside audio and video material. The Committee developed guidelines for newsrooms to follow as they consider whether to incorporate this material into their own stories or programs. The guidelines were released at RTNDA’s annual convention in April 2005. A copy of the guidelines is provided as Attachment B.

Because electronic journalists operate as trustees of the public, underlying the RTNDA VNR guidelines is the basic tenet that the public must be properly informed. News operations

are primarily concerned with the collection and accurate reporting of relevant news stories to their listeners and viewers, and have every incentive to keep a sharp eye out for practices that could undermine the independence of their reporting. In the vast majority of cases, news is collected directly by the local news staff, network news operations and subscription news services. Even when third party video or audio is received, it generally will not be used by a local news organization if similar material can be obtained directly by the station or through a network feed. RTNDA's guidelines reflect and reinforce this practice. When a judgment is made that third party video is relevant to a news story and cannot be obtained through a news source, the guidelines call for the clear disclosure of the origin of the material—and this disclosure applies to all sources of third party materials, including private parties, corporations and all levels of government. The guidelines cover a broad range of situations and VNR materials. They seek to protect the editorial integrity of the audio and video aired, to avoid commercialization of a news stories, and to otherwise guard against third party influence of news content.

Admittedly, RTNDA has no enforcement powers regarding its Code of Ethics or VNR Guidelines. RTNDA respectfully submits, however, that significant market forces compel electronic journalists to follow these guidelines or similar principles to maintain the credibility of their newscasts. Simply put, if they do not, they will alienate their audiences. In March, the *New York Times* reported that the federal government was sending an unprecedented number of VNRs to local stations and found evidence that some stations were using the releases without altering them or identifying them. Unfortunately, as the story was spread through other news media, the impression grew that the use of unidentified audio and video from government agencies was a rampant practice.

One simple way to destroy the integrity of a news operation is leave listeners or viewers with the impression that a newscast is a “sales pitch,” or that third parties can otherwise improperly influence editorial content. Faced with challenges to the credibility of local news from reports that originated with this *New York Times* story, news directors met with their staffs, reiterated and updated their disclosure policies. RTNDA’s guidelines have played an important role in facilitating those newsroom discussions.

RTNDA believes, therefore, that government intervention is unnecessary given that sufficient incentives exist to ensure that the public receives high quality, accurate information and is fully informed as to the source of third party material.

## **II. VNR SOURCES, DISTRIBUTION, IDENTIFICATION**

VNRs are, essentially, the video or audio equivalent of a press release. They come in a variety of forms. They may contain voiceless film clips, such as space shuttle footage, Defense Department “file tape” or manufacturing video; suggested written scripts, or ideas for “localizing” a “story.” Sometimes, VNRs contain complete audio-video presentations, otherwise known as “prepackaged news stories.”

RTNDA’s members report that the vast majority of VNRs they receive are corporate in nature. According to RTNDA’s members, government VNRs constitute a small percentage of the total VNR material received by local stations.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, *not a single member reported that they or their station had ever been offered payment or other consideration for broadcasting a VNR.* VNRs are offered free of charge and, where provided on tape or DVD, without obligation to return the hard copy.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, several stations indicated that government-produced VNRs constituted less than 10 percent of the material they received from outside sources; others described the ratio between corporate and government VNRs as 20:1.



VNRs enter newsrooms through a variety of means. Some are sent by overnight mail on tape or DVD. Newsrooms may also be notified by e-mail, fax or phone that a satellite feed containing VNR material will be available at a certain date and time. Increasingly, VNRs are delivered directly to newsroom computer systems and available for download through some network feed services.

RTNDA's members report that the network services that do distribute VNRs and related material have taken significant steps to insure that VNR material contained in their feeds is isolated and prominently identified as such. Generally speaking, RTNDA's members indicate that regardless of the distribution means, material produced by government or educational entities is almost always clearly labeled as to source. Commercial providers, however, are occasionally more subtle in disclosing the nature and the reason for the VNR. Where it is difficult to ascertain the source of material received from third parties, newsrooms generally will not use that material.

### **III. VNR USE**

Underlying the Commission's sponsorship identification rules is the notion that listeners and viewers "are entitled to know by whom they are being persuaded." Certainly, the rules contemplate that licensees will take reasonable steps to inform themselves as to the type and nature of the material being broadcast by its station. Section 317 of the Communications Act and similar antecedent legislation was clearly enacted to prevent deception on the part of the public growing out of concealment of the fact that the broadcast of particular program material was induced by consideration received by the licensee.

Historically, sponsorship identification requirements have been applied outside the context of newscasts because of the matching objective inherent in broadcast journalism—to fully and accurately inform the public. Credibility is the fundamental attribute of a news

organization. If viewers do not trust the information they get from broadcast journalists, there is absolutely no point in presenting news and information on television. Therefore, journalists make every effort to contextualize their reporting and sourcing for viewers.

Where a news release is furnished to a station, whether in audio, video or paper format, editorial comment may be derived from the material. But journalists are trained to go through a script line by line. To challenge every fact. To be aware that they may think something is true when it is not. To be meticulous about sources for a story. To recognize that because someone says something on tape does not make it so. To know what a “newsmaker’s” biases are, what their agendas are and whether they can speak with authority on the subject. To always bear in mind that the credibility of the sources will reflect on the credibility of their news organization. To always strive for fairness, accuracy and balance.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the information collected by RTNDA reveals that instances where “prepackaged news stories” distributed through VNRs have been broadcast without alternation are isolated. In the widely publicized case of the Medicare VNR featuring former journalist Karen Ryan, it is RTNDA’s understanding that distribution in a newer, digital format resulted in some confusion—certain stations mistook the VNR for a “story” from a network editorial source, and broadcast the prepackaged piece without alteration. It is also RTNDA’s understanding, however, that in the wake of this mishap, the networks that distribute VNR material have taken definitive steps to ensure that third party material included in news service feeds is segregated from bona fide news content and easily identifiable.

Whether or not VNRs are used at all is within the purview of individual news organizations. Many stations require collaboration between reporters and management in evaluating the content and possible use of VNRs; still others leave the decisions up to the

station's executive producer. As one news director noted, the material contained in VNRs is evaluated to determine if it can be utilized in a story that meets the station's basic news philosophy: (1) hard news content; (2) local relevance; (3) broad impact; and (4) high interest.

Almost universally, members' policies absolutely prohibit the use of prepackaged news stories from non-editorial sources. Some told RTNDA that their policies preclude use of any part of a VNR (*i.e.*, pre-packaged story, B-roll, any audio or video). Exceptions noted by several members are packages prepared by the U.S. military that feature local servicemen stationed in Iraq or elsewhere ("Hometown Heroes"), or video of local soldiers saying "Happy Holidays" to loved ones back home.

The material contained in VNRs is more likely to be used as background footage or excerpted in stories that the newsrooms produce themselves. But if the source of the material cannot be ascertained, news directors say, it simply will not be used. Many news directors indicate that they have approved the use of VNR excerpts if they are unable to obtain the audio or video themselves, and that they label such video "courtesy of" or "provided by." For example, stations will use video taken from local manufacturing facilities with restricted access, military training exercises, tours of nuclear power plants, sound bites from government officials (particularly where they are of local or regional interest), interviews with stars and footage from recently released movies, or NASA video. Several indicated that they occasionally use clips from interviews with their Senators and Congressmen that are distributed by the legislators' offices, but only after vetting and with disclosure.

Where stations do use VNRs, they often pull video from the release and write a story based on the VNR and independent facts their journalists obtain. The story may be supplemented with local video. A Texas station with an Air Force Base in its community, for

example, used video taken from an Air Force News piece that showed the view from inside a B-1 bomber cockpit. This video was used in a station-produced story about training missions over West Texas, and the station used a super to let its viewers know the B-1 video incorporated into the piece was provided by the Air Force.

Where respondents said that their stations they did permit VNR usage in some form, they uniformly indicated that their policy is to clearly disclose the origin of information and label all materials. As one respondent, noted, “letting the viewer know who the source is will put them in a better position to decide what to make of a story.” Disclosure, however, is not a “one size fits all” proposition. A crawl that reads “PRODUCED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT” running continuously throughout a story that incorporated material provided by the federal government may serve only to confuse viewers rather than providing them with appropriate context to evaluate the information contained in a news piece. Depending on the nature of the material used and the content of a story, the format and text of disclosures may vary. It may be important to note “Video supplied by Senator Jones,” or “NASA Video,” or “Interview Conducted by Congress Smith’s Staff,” to give listeners and viewers a clearer picture. It may be more appropriate for a super to appear only over a small segment of a piece that uses B-roll footage supplied by a third party. Such judgments are properly left to journalists’ editorial discretion.

#### **IV. APPLICATION OF SECTION 317(a)(2)**

The Commission’s *Notice* reminds broadcast licensees and cable operators that they have a greater obligation of disclosure in connection with political material and program matter dealing with controversial issues. Even where such material is provided to a station free or at a nominal charge, the Commission’s rules require the airing of sponsorship disclosure in such situations.

RTNDA respectfully submits that the determination of what is “political material” or “program matter dealing with controversial issues” should be left to the good faith discretion of broadcasters. The Commission should clarify that its sponsorship identification obligations apply only to the broadcast of a prepackaged news story that falls within one of these categories “as is,” not to other uses of VNR material.<sup>3</sup> Where applicable, the disclosure requirements imposed upon broadcasters should be consistent with the sponsorship identification obligations pertinent to material received in exchange for consideration.

## **V. FURTHER REGULATION OF VNR USE IS UNWARRANTED AND RAISES CONSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS**

In evaluating the use of VNRs by broadcasters and cablecasters, the Commission should be aware that VNR distribution does not necessarily result in the broadcast of “sneaky commercials,” as the FCC once termed the target of its sponsorship identification rules. It is not accurate to assume that VNRs—whether government, corporate, or other—only end up on the air as disguised infomercials. As demonstrated above, prepackaged news stories seldom run in their entirety, and VNRs do not preclude editorial discretion when offered to stations. In fact, VNRs may pinpoint material that electronic journalists consider legitimately newsworthy, such as the development of a new drug or a company’s response to the government’s charge of wrongdoing. Some provide stations with video of public interest that might otherwise be attainable, such as crash tests from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, B-roll of a new medical procedure, or footage of obscure or fast breaking events.

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<sup>3</sup> Such an interpretation of the rule would be consistent with Commission precedent: “News releases are furnished to a station by Government, business, labor and civic organizations, and private persons, with respect to their activities, and editorial comment therefrom is used on a program. No announcement is necessary.” *See In the Matter of Amendment of Sections 3.119, 3.289, 3.654 and 3.789 of the Commission’s Rules*, 40 F.C.C. 105, 112 (1961).

In its efforts to ensure that listeners and viewers “know by whom they are being persuaded,” the Commission should be careful not to undermine the First Amendment value of fostering a wide dissemination of information to the public. The concept behind the First Amendment’s free press guarantee—“Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom . . . of the press”—was an integral part of the freedom of thought and expression that was necessary to developing informed and educated citizens and a free democratic society. This liberty is not without its inconveniences, but, as Thomas Jefferson so eloquently stated, “I would rather be exposed to the inconvenience attending too much liberty than those attending too small a degree of it.” The freedoms accorded us under the First Amendment involve at times unpatriotic acts, hateful demonstrations, offensive music lyrics, and—despite journalists’ best efforts—mistakes in reporting, whether on the nightly news or in the paper.

Moreover, given the role of the press as government watchdog, it would be incongruous to suggest that it is appropriate for the government to prescribe what disclosures must be made in news stories concerning the government, even if the pieces incorporate some government-produced material. The First Amendment was adopted to protect the people from the government, and does not afford the government license to regulate the free press under the guise of serving the public interest where no compelling reason exists. Consistent with our democratic principles, journalists must remain free to sort through a volume of information, to ascertain accurate facts, and to provide fair interpretation to the citizenry.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Press releases and VNRs have been in use for decades and, without doubt, material has been utilized without proper disclosure or attribution, both in the print and electronic media. RTNDA’s evidence, however, suggests that the use of prepackaged news stories or unidentified audio and video from government agencies is not the widespread practice recent reports suggest.

Nonetheless, RTNDA's members recognize the dangers inherent in using material from outside sources. The relative few who discovered that outside material was being broadcast without proper attribution demonstrated a willingness to ensure that future errors would not occur. News organizations around the country have re-evaluated their policies, urged clear identification by VNR providers, and redoubled their efforts to train newsroom personnel to protect the editorial integrity of the video and audio they air. These efforts come not as the result of threatened government intervention, but in response to the public's unsparing expectation of fairness, accuracy, and independence in the professional behavior of journalists. Given existing safeguards, RTNDA urges the Commission to temper its inquiry into VNR use and not to take action that would inhibit news sources or otherwise interfere with the editorial discretion of broadcasters.

Respectfully submitted,

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**ATTACHMENT A**

**RTNDA CODE OF ETHICS**





# ETHICS

## CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT RADIO-TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

The Radio-Television News Directors Association, wishing to foster the highest professional standards of electronic journalism, promote public understanding of and confidence in electronic journalism, and strengthen principles of journalistic freedom to gather and disseminate information, establishes this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

### PREAMBLE

Professional electronic journalists should operate as trustees of the public, seek the truth, report it fairly and with integrity and independence, and stand accountable for their actions.

**PUBLIC TRUST:** Professional electronic journalists should recognize that their first obligation is to the public.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Understand that any commitment other than service to the public undermines trust and credibility.
- Recognize that service in the public interest creates an obligation to reflect the diversity of the community and guard against oversimplification of issues or events.
- Provide a full range of information to enable the public to make enlightened decisions.
- Fight to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public.

**TRUTH:** Professional electronic journalists should pursue truth aggressively and present the news accurately, in context, and as completely as possible.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Continuously seek the truth.
- Resist distortions that obscure the importance of events.
- Clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by outsiders.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Report anything known to be false.
- Manipulate images or sounds in any way that is misleading.

- Plagiarize.
- Present images or sounds that are reenacted without informing the public.

**FAIRNESS:** Professional electronic journalists should present the news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Treat all subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.
- Exercise special care when children are involved in a story and give children greater privacy protection than adults.
- Seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype.
- Present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in context.
- Present analytical reporting based on professional perspective, not personal bias.
- Respect the right to a fair trial.

**INTEGRITY:** Professional electronic journalists should present the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of news.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Identify sources whenever possible. Confidential sources should be used only when it is clearly in the public interest to gather or convey important information or when a person providing information might be harmed. Journalists should keep all commitments to protect a confidential source.
- Clearly label opinion and commentary.
- Guard against extended coverage of events or individuals that fails to significantly advance a story, place the event in context, or add to the public knowledge.
- Refrain from contacting participants in violent situations while the situation is in progress.
- Use technological tools with skill and thoughtfulness, avoiding techniques that skew facts, distort reality, or sensationalize events.
- Use surreptitious newsgathering techniques, including hidden cameras or microphones, only if there is no other way to obtain stories of significant public importance and only if the technique is explained to the audience.
- Disseminate the private transmissions of other news organizations only with permission.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Pay news sources who have a vested interest in a story.
- Accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
- Engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Professional electronic journalists should defend the independence of all

journalists from those seeking influence or control over news content.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Gather and report news without fear or favor, and vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces, including advertisers, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, and special interest groups.
- Resist those who would seek to buy or politically influence news content or who would seek to intimidate those who gather and disseminate the news.
- Determine news content solely through editorial judgment and not as the result of outside influence.
- Resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public.
- Recognize that sponsorship of the news will not be used in any way to determine, restrict, or manipulate content.
- Refuse to allow the interests of ownership or management to influence news judgment and content inappropriately.
- Defend the rights of the free press for all journalists, recognizing that any professional or government licensing of journalists is a violation of that freedom.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Professional electronic journalists should recognize that they are accountable for their actions to the public, the profession, and themselves.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Actively encourage adherence to these standards by all journalists and their employers.
- Respond to public concerns. Investigate complaints and correct errors promptly and with as much prominence as the original report.
- Explain journalistic processes to the public, especially when practices spark questions or controversy.
- Recognize that professional electronic journalists are duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically.
- Refrain from ordering or encouraging courses of action that would force employees to commit an unethical act.
- Carefully listen to employees who raise ethical objections and create environments in which such objections and discussions are encouraged.
- Seek support for and provide opportunities to train employees in ethical decision-making.

In meeting its responsibility to the profession of electronic journalism, RTNDA has created this code to identify important issues, to serve as a guide for its members, to facilitate self-scrutiny, and to shape future debate.

*Adopted at RTNDA2000 in Minneapolis September 14, 2000.*

**ATTACHMENT B**

**RTNDA GUIDELINES FOR USE OF  
NON-EDITORIAL VIDEO AND AUDIO**



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

### RTNDA GUIDELINES FOR USE OF NON-EDITORIAL VIDEO AND AUDIO

Television and radio stations should strive to protect the editorial integrity of the video and audio they air. This integrity, at times, might come into question when stations air video and audio provided to newsrooms by companies, organizations or governmental agencies with political or financial interests in publicizing the material. News staffs should find answers to the following questions when making decisions to broadcast video or audio produced and/or supplied by non-editorial sources.

RTNDA's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct states that professional electronic journalists should "clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by outsiders." The following guidelines are offered to meet this goal.

- News managers and producers should determine if the station is able to shoot this video or capture this audio itself, or get it through regular editorial channels, such as its network feed service. If this video/audio is available in no other way but through corporate release (as in the case of proprietary assembly line video), then managers should decide what value using the video/audio brings to the newscast, and if that value outweighs the possible appearance of "product placement" or commercial interests.
- News managers and producers should clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by corporate or other non-editorial sources. For example, graphics could denote "Mercy Hospital video" and the reporter or anchor script could also acknowledge it by stating, "This operating room video was provided by Mercy Hospital."
- News managers and producers should determine if interviews provided with video/audio releases follow the same standards regarding conflicts of interest as used in the newsroom. For instance, some releases might contain interviews where subjects and interviewers are employed by the same organization. Consider whether tough questions were asked and if the subject was properly questioned.
- Before re-voicing and airing stories released with all their elements and intended for that purpose, managers and producers should ask questions regarding whether the editorial process behind the story is in concert with those used in the newsroom. Some questions to ask include whether more than one side is included, if there is a financial agenda to releasing the story, and if the viewers and/or listeners would believe this is work done locally by your team.
- Producers should question the source of network feed video that appears to have come

from sources other than the network's news operation. Network feed producers should supply information revealing the source of such material.

- News managers and producers should consider how video/audio released from groups without a profit or political agenda, such as nonprofit, charitable and educational institutions, will be used in newscasts, if at all. Can this material add valuable insight to local stories? Has it been issued to be aired locally and credited to the issuing organizations. Will viewers find it to be useful information?

*Developed by the RTNDA Ethics Committee, April 2005*

*For more information about RTNDA go to [www.rtna.org](http://www.rtna.org)*